

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-12 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20 T-03 OMB-01 RSR-01 /142 W
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R 190400 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8811

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4421

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MARR VS

SUBJECT: INDODEL PROBES AMB WHITEHOUSE ON VN/ ICCS SITUATION

1. AMBASSADOR IMRAD IDRIS OF ICCS INDODEL SOUGHT ASSESSMENT OF OVERALL SITUATION AND ICCS FROM AMB WHITEHOUSE MARCH 16. IDRIS INQUIRED WHAT EMBASSY ANTICIPATED IN POST- MARCH 28 PERIOD, NOTING AMBASSADOR DHARSONO WOULD BECOME ICCS CHAIRMAN APRIL 1. WHITEHOUSE EXPRESSED VIEW OTHER SIDE UNLIKELY TO TAKE LARGER SCALE MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST GVN, DESPITE NUMEROUS REPORTS AND SUSPICIONS EMANATING FROM VARIOUS GVN OFFICIALS, BECAUSE OF CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL FACTORS WHICH HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT PARIS SETTLEMENT, AND BECAUSE DRV/ PRG RECOGNIZED THEY HAD FAILED IN BOTH GUERRILA AND IN CONVENTIONAL WAR EFFORTS AND ARE THUS OBLIGED TO ATTEMPT BASICALLY POLITICAL STRUGGLE. WHITEHOUSE NOTED COMMUNISTS WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP MILITARY CAPABILITIES, AS THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY DOING WITH SIGNIFICANT INFILTRATION SINCE CEASEFIRE, BUT IF APPEARS UNLIKELY THEY ARE WILL BE SOON IN A POSITION TO LAUNCH MAJOR MILITARY ACTION.

2. IN DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN GVN AND PRG, WHITEHOUSE NOTED WIDE- SPREAD AND DEEP DISTRUST BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE PARTIES WHICH WOULD MAKE ACHIEVEMENT
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OF WORKING ARRANGEMENT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND TIME CONSUMING. CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS HAVE BEEN EVIDENT ON BOTH SIDES- A REFLECTION IN LARGE MEASURE OF THIS DISTRUST. IDRIS AGREED WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH WHITEHOUSE OF THE NEED FOR THE TWO SIDES TO REACH "EQUILIBRIUM". WHITEHOUSE EMPHASIZED ALL CONCERNED PARTIES, INCLUDING ICCS, MUST STRIVE TO REDUCE LEVEL OF FIGHTING, AND HE ADDED IT APPEARS TWO SIDES ARE APPROACHING SOME DEGREE OF "EQUILIBRIUM" EVEN NOW.

3. WITH RESPECT TO GVN/ PRG BILATERAL TALKS IN PARIS, WHITEHOUSE OBSERVED GVN DELEGATIONS IS OF SUBSTANTIAL QUALITY AND A NUMBER OF KEY GVN REPS ARE WELL KNOWN AS REASONABLE MEN. HE ADDED MOST TOP GVN POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATION FIGURES REALIZE FIGHTING MUST STOP, ALTHOUGH ALMOST ALL REMAIN DISTRUSTFUL OF VIET CONG AND PROCESS OF ACCOMODATION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE SLOWER THAN WAS CALLED FOR IN PARIS AGREEMENT. WHITEHOUSE STATED THERE IS NO QUESTION PRESIDENT THIEU IS EAGER FOR EARLY ELECTIONS, BUT ADDED IT IS OF COURSE POSSIBLE COMMUNISTS MAY REFUSE TO ACCEPT RESULTS OF FREE ELECTIONS.

4. IDRIS SOUGHT EMBASSY VIEWS ON "3 RD FORCE" ENVISAGED IN AGREEMENT. WHITEHOUSE REPLIED THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO PERCEIVE THAT VIETNAMESE ELEMENTS COULD PLAY A ROLE IN THE "3 RD FORCE" IN A GENUINELY " NEUTRAL" SENSE, AND CONJECTURED THAT THE NET RESULT OF GVN/ PRG DISCUSSIONS ON THIS ASPECT COULD BE ESSENTIALLY A DIVISION OF THE "3 RD FORCE" INTO PROTEGES OF EITHER ONE OR THE OTHER SIDE.

5. INDONESIAN INQUIRED WHETHER TIME FAVORED GVN OR COMMUNISTS. NOTING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS GVN HAD MADE IN LATE 60' S AND PRE-1972 COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE PERIOD, WHITEHOUSE CONCLUDED TIME IS ON SIDE OF GVN, NOW THAT 1972 INVASION HAS BEEN HALTED AND GVN IS AGAIN PROGRESSING ON OTHER FRONTS. IN ADDITION, HE NOTED GVN IS MILITARILY SOUND AND COULD WITHSTAND ANY ADDITIONAL ONSLAUGHT. HE ADDED IT APPEARS TENSION WITHIN SVN SLOWLY EBBING AND CONFIDENCE IS GROWING.

6. IDRIS REMARKED THAT INDODEL HAS OBSERVED GVN IS " SLOW STARTING" AND INDODEL HAS OFTEN FOUND IT AWKWARD TO DEFEND GVN IN ICCS SESSIONS. IDRIS ADDED, INDODEL OFTEN ATTEMPTS FIND COMPROMISE BETWEEN POLDEL/ HUNGDEL AND CANDEL POSITIONS ON COMMISSION.
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7. IN RESPONSE TO WHITEHOUSE' S QUESTION RE INDONESIAN VIEW OF GOC INTENTIONS VIS- A- VIS ICCS, IDRIS SAID FLATLY INDODEL DOES NOT BELIEVE GOC WILL PULL OUT. IDRIS AGREED WITH WHITEHOUSE COMMENT THAT GOC COULD FIND RELIEF IN ACT THAT ICCS, UNLIKE ICC, IS NOT AN OPEN- ENDED COMMITMENT.

8. IDRIS CONCLUDED BY ASKING WHETHER US KNEW IF DRV WOULD MAINTAIN PRESENCE IN SAIGON AFTER FIRST 60 DAYS. HE OBSERVED THAT DRV DEL ON JMC, MAJOR GEN HOA, DURING COURSE OF RETURN COURTESY CALL ON INDODEL AMBASSADOR DJARSONO, HAD EXPRESSED DRV INTENTION TO RETAIN MISSION IN SAIGON AFTER MARCH 28.

9. COMMENT: IDRIS HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN TASKED WITH OBTAINING US VIEWS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL MARCH 18 OF LIASISON GROUP FROM JAKARTA WHICH WILL MAKE ASSESSMENT OF FIRST 50 DAYS OF ICCS, RETURNING JAKARTA MARCH 22. IDRIS REITERATED, HOWEVER, IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER, THAT GOI HAD NO INTENTION WHATSOEVER OF CONSIDERING WITHDRAWAL FROM ICCS. BUNKER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: smithrj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON04421
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730335/aaaaidph.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EAP
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: smithrj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Sep-2001 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <18-Oct-2001 by smithrj>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 971218
Subject: INDODEL PROBES AMB WHITEHOUSE ON VN/ ICCS SITUATION
TAGS: MARR, VM
To: EA
FRANCE
JAKARTA
OTTAWA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

